

Executive Summary & Conclusions Survey of College Station Senior Citizens

Eisenhower Leadership Development Program
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Executive Summary

As the City of College Station continues to grow so does its senior citizen population. The College Station City Council has set forth one of its goals as being to "determine the space and facility needs for senior programs." Previous research on the subject has stated that the programs and facilities available to the city's senior citizens were not adequate. In order to determine the true needs and desires of the senior citizens of College Station further research has been conducted.

This report includes research and studies done to analyze the program needs of the senior citizen community in College Station. It examines the interest of seniors in a new senior citizen facility. It also looks at the needs and availability of transportation for seniors in order to participate in programs. Finally, it analyzes popular and successful programs that either are currently available to seniors or which could be developed in the future. Based on these investigations recommendations are provided concerning how the City of College Station can better serve its senior citizen population.

In order to arrive at these findings an extensive literature review has been researched and compiled. First, a survey was sent to a sample population of College Station seniors asking them questions concerning how active they currently are, and how interested they would be in a new senior center. The survey also addressed the areas of transportation, and what kinds of interests the seniors had. To further address the transportation question research was conducted to determine how public transportation could be used in helping seniors participate in programs designed for them. Research was also done to examine senior citizen programs that are currently available not only in College Station, but also in other cities.

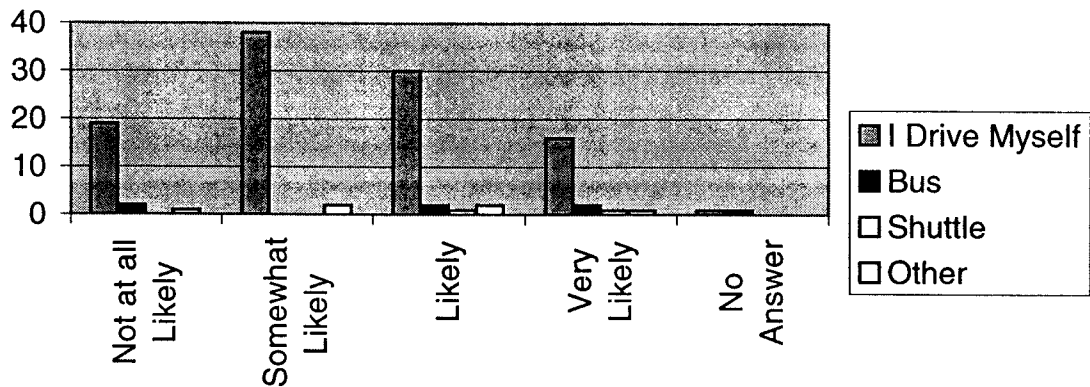
Based on this research, there is insufficient evidence of a desire and need by the senior citizen community to build a new facility for them. Instead, it is recommended that the City attempt to publicize currently existing senior programs. These programs already address many senior citizen interests and do not need a new facility. It is recommended that in order to coordinate these programs the City could run them from a central location such as the Teen Exit Center. In addition to this, there also was not a strong desire or apparent need for a new type of transportation program. The City should instead rely on personal transportation and currently existing public transportation means for seniors to participate in different programs.

It is recommended that further research be done in order to determine other ways of advertising programs to the senior citizen community. It is also recommended that research be continually done to determine new programs that are successful in other communities.

Transportation v Attend a New Center

	Not at all Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely	No Answer
No Answer Given	0	0	0	1	5
I Drive Myself	19	38	30	16	1
Bus	2	0	2	2	1
Shuttle	0	0	1	1	0
Other	1	2	2	1	0

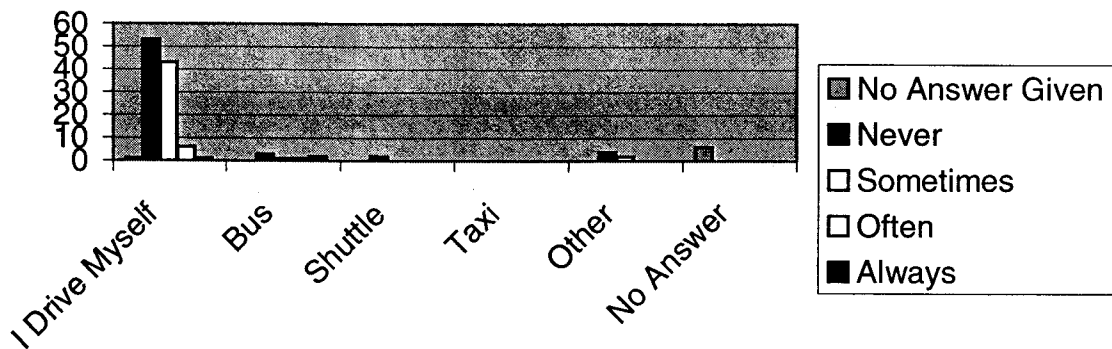
Transportation v Attend a New Center



Participation Frequency v Transportation

	I Drive Myself	Bus	Shuttle	Taxi	Other	No Answer
No Answer Given	1	0	0	0	0	6
Never	53	3	2	0	4	0
Sometimes	43	1	0	0	2	0
Often	6	1	0	0	0	0
Always	1	2	0	0	0	0

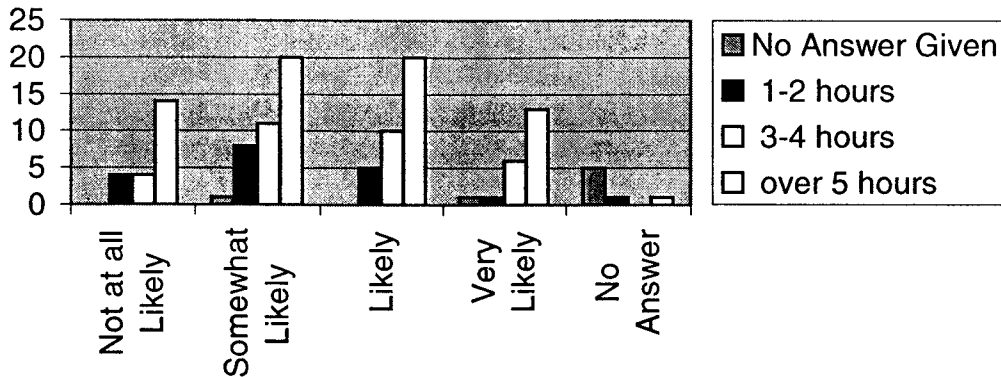
Participation Frequency v Transportation



Activity Level v Attend a New Center

	Not at all Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely	No Answer
No Answer Given	0	1	0	1	5
1-2 hours	4	8	5	1	1
3-4 hours	4	11	10	6	0
over 5 hours	14	20	20	13	1

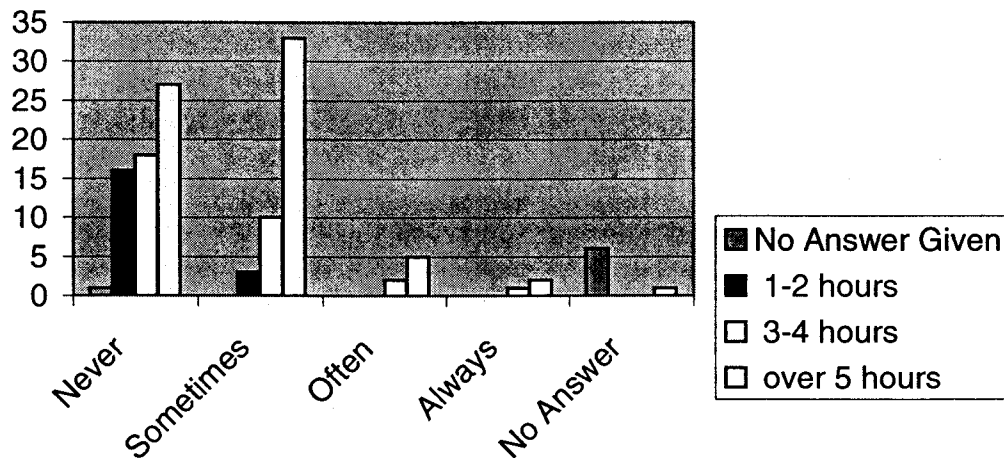
Activity Level v Attend a New Center



Activity Level v Participation Frequency

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	No Answer
No Answer Given	1	0	0	0	6
1-2 hours	16	3	0	0	0
3-4 hours	18	10	2	1	0
over 5 hours	27	33	5	2	1

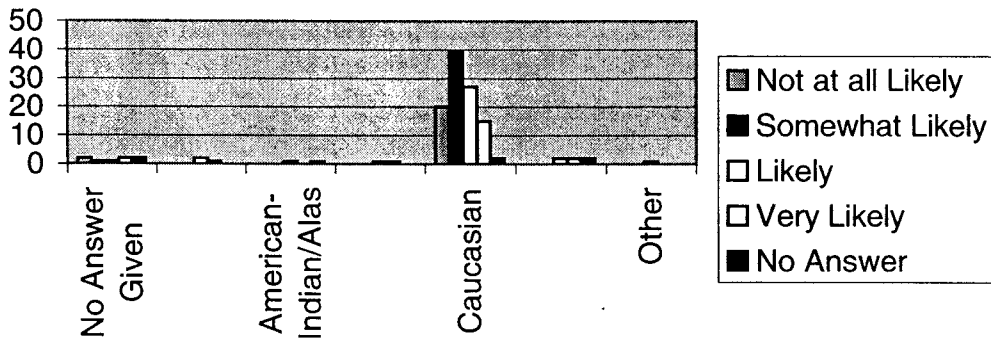
Activity Level v Participation Frequency



Race v Attend a New Center

	Not at all Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely	No Answer
No Answer Given	2	1	1	2	2
African-American	0	0	2	1	0
American-Indian/A	0	0	1	0	1
Asian or Pacific Is	0	0	1	1	0
Caucasian	20	39	27	15	2
Hispanic	0	0	2	2	2
Other	0	0	1	0	0

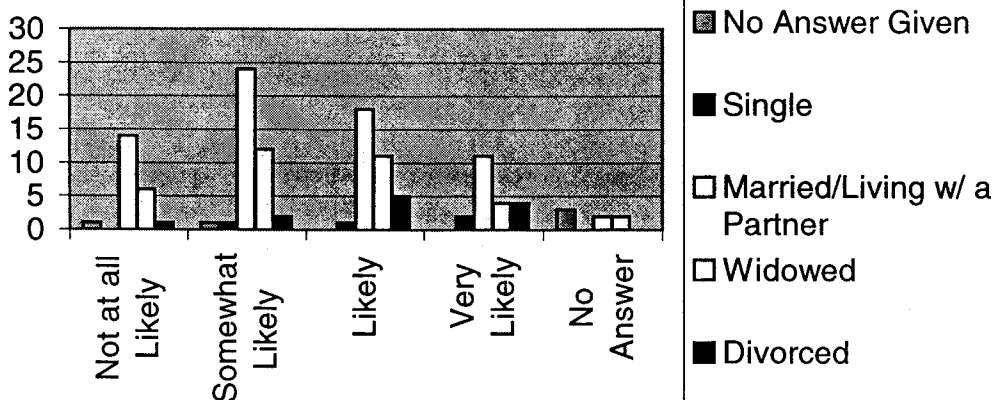
Race v Attend a New Center



Companionship v Attend a New Center

	Not at all Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely	No Answer
No Answer Given	1	1	0	0	3
Single	0	1	1	2	0
Married/Living w/ i	14	24	18	11	2
Widowed	6	12	11	4	2
Divorced	1	2	5	4	0

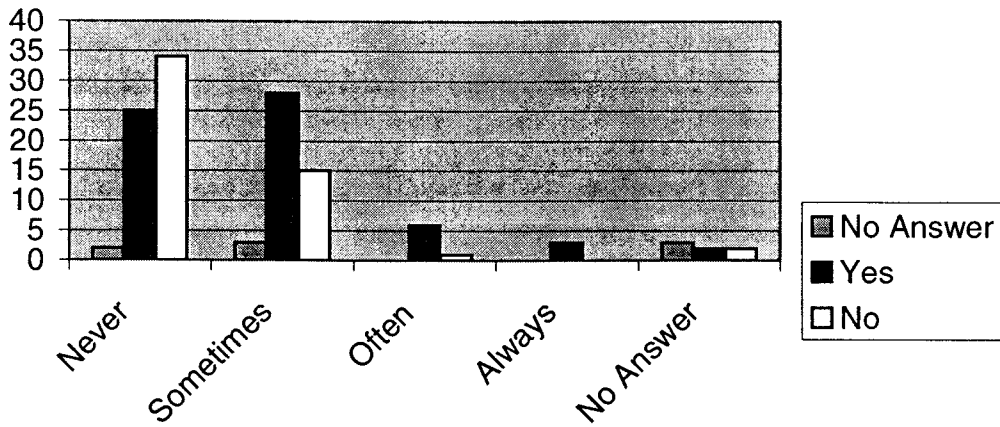
Companionship v Attend a New Center



Received Information v Participation Frequency

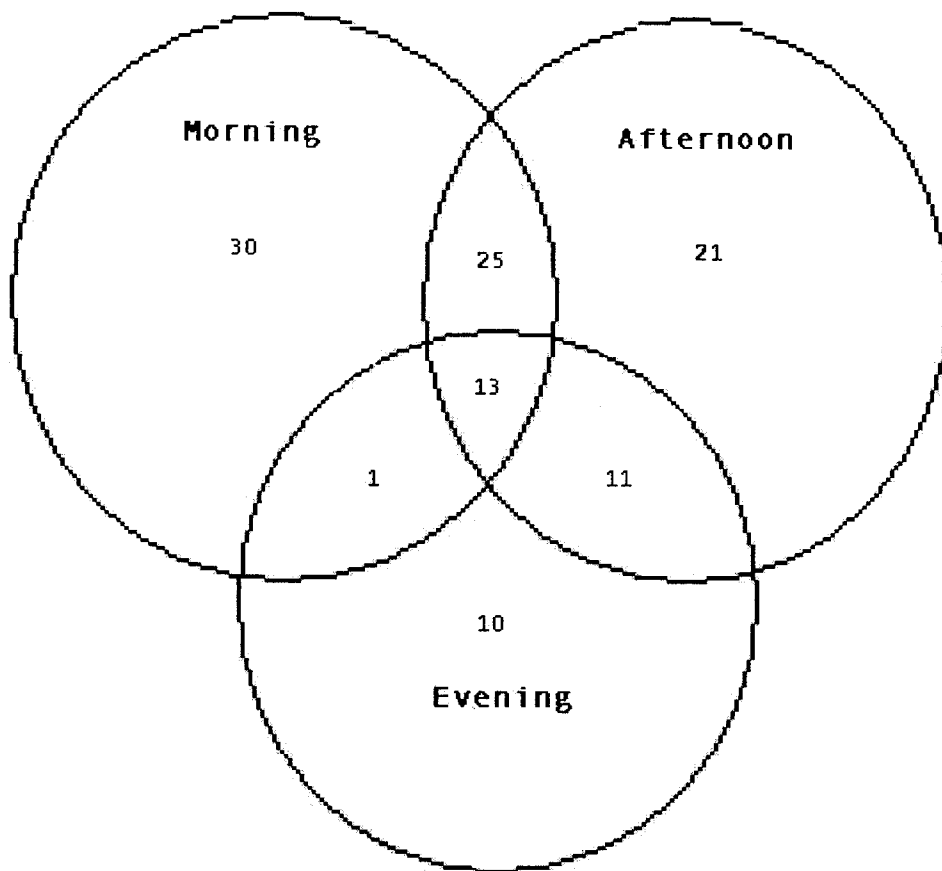
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	No Answer
No Answer	2	3	0	0	3
Yes	25	28	6	3	2
No	34	15	1	0	2

Received Information v Participation Frequency



Time of Day v Attend New Center
Number of People Willing to Attend

Morning 69
Afternoon 70
Evening 35



Most seniors were willing to attend a new center either in the morning or the afternoon or both. Half as many seniors wanted to attend the center in the evening. Only, six percent were willing to attend in the evening only. The morning and evening are when the majority of seniors are willing to attend a new center, this would work quite well with the existing youth center since it is not used before three o'clock in the afternoon.

Recommendations

The programs offered to seniors in the College Station area should satisfy needs of the mind, body, and spirit. A comprehensive set of programs aimed at satisfying the needs of senior citizens in College Station is the ultimate goal of this project. The recommendations are a combination of new and existing programs using current facilities in the area, and are meant to sharpen the mind, stimulate the body, and renew the spirit. The recommendations are based on research data of the senior citizen community.

The Mind

Seniors in the College Station area want to learn about numerous topics ranging from Spanish to fashion and current events to genealogy. It is recommended that existing programs available through Texas A & M University Degree Auditing, Memorial Student Center University Plus, and College Station's Xtra Education be utilized. Such programs could meet the current needs of seniors in all areas, excluding highly specialized topics and interests. Cost may be prohibitive for some, but these costs could possibly be reduced if the city coordinated these programs to take advantage of reduced group rates.

The Body

Many seniors in College Station still live fairly active lifestyles and engage in various activities to stay healthy. These activities include running, tennis, and walking. Based on the survey results, most activities popular with seniors are already available through Texas A & M Rec Sports and current programs offered by the City. In order to

facilitate senior physical activities it is recommended that the City organize support groups to coordinate senior participation in current programming.

The Spirit

College Station seniors desire to socialize with their peers by maintaining and creating new friendships. The survey results indicate that nearly all of the programs senior citizens are interested in are currently being offered somewhere in the area. An Excel spreadsheet is attached mapping the events to their availability. The only two expressed needs that are not currently being met through existing programs are games/events and trips.

Games and Events:

Many seniors currently play games such as cards or dominoes in small groups or at organized meetings. The City should help in coordination and support for these games and since most seniors expressed interest in daytime activities these events could occur at the Exit Teen Center. Publicity and information dissemination should also be undertaken by the City to aid in community awareness.

Trips:

Many seniors desire to take trips and have experiences outside of College Station. Houston, San Antonio, and Austin were popular destinations in survey responses, along with the generic categories of museums, hunting, shopping, and performances

Suggestions for Success

Get the Senior Advisory Committee (SAC) involved.

The SAC is a group of very motivated seniors craving an opportunity to help other seniors in the area. They desire and are capable of taking greater responsibility than that of simply giving their opinions, and are a resource for ideas and assistance in implementing portions of this project. The SAC's input and motivation would help lighten the load of the City while also ensuring the City's efforts are meeting the need of the senior community.

Continue to Gauge Senior Needs

The City should respond to the needs of the senior community as they are identified in a quantifiable way. Make sure there is interest in having more programs, and that sufficient residents in the area would actually go to the program before new programs are added. Utilize programs available in the community that are not specifically for senior citizens. Example resources for such programs include Texas A&M University, Memorial Student Center University Plus, and Xtra Education programs. As needs surpass the opportunities afforded by current programming the city should look at increasing and consolidating programs.

Based on the results of the senior survey it is recommended that the City does not need to build a senior center at this time. Opportunities for the City to use existing facilities are available, and they should be capitalized upon. If programmings needs begin to exceed facility capacities the feasibility of building a dedicated senior center should be reinvestigated.

Organize program efforts

Current programs are already meeting the needs of the senior community, however there is little or no coordination among programs. The city should work to make it easier for seniors to participate in programs offered by different organizations. Coordination could lead to a system where seniors could learn about, register, and pay for programs through the city.

Increase awareness through education and advertising

The City should compile a complete list of available programs and send them in a newsletter or newspaper ad to the seniors in College Station. Interested seniors could register to receive the letter at tables during events and at popular places. Other ideas to inform the senior population of opportunities include The Golden Eagle, public radio announcements, public access television, and the utility bill newsletter. In addition, the SAC could evaluate successful and failing programs to find out what makes a program succeed, and then develop those characteristics in other programs. Increasing visibility of existing programming in the area could stimulate demand for the programs. As certain programs and programming in general become more popular, a future survey could be conducted to discern if a senior center is needed to consolidate the programs to one location.

Address Transportation Issues as Needed

Transportation is a key part in having a successful senior center, but based on the sample population there is not a strong need for the city to develop a special transportation program for seniors. Special programs currently existing in College Station such as Elder Aid would not be successful for an expanded senior citizen program. Both programs have very limited budgets and resources, and appear too costly to expand. Programs like Shared Ride are not recommended based on the lack of support demonstrated by those surveyed.

It is recommended that instead of attempting to develop new, special programs the City should rely on current means of transportation. Most of those seniors who replied to the survey said that they drive themselves. The seniors should be encouraged to carpool within their program groups, but it should be left up to them. The second most popular means of travel stated by respondents is the Brazos Transit System. The handicap accessible busses with eight different routes, and discounts available to those over 60 years of age make the system a valuable resource. If senior programs were developed at the Exit Teen Center then it would not be a problem because the center is on the bus route. Because of the popularity of these modes of transportation, it is recommended that the City rely upon them instead of new travel programs.

Use Existing Facilities

When the problem arises of where to house some of the potentially beneficial programs that are not currently offered, the City of College Station should look at the Exit Teen Center as a place to hold these events. Although the center is only available in

the morning and before 3 p.m., this is not a problem since the survey results indicated most seniors like to participate in activities during this time.